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ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 101st anniversary of the Armenian genocide. Over the years in Rhode Island, I have spoken with many Armenian Americans who have recounted the stories their parents or grandparents told them about living through the horror of the Armenian genocide. Even after 100 years, there is still a deep wound in the heart of the Armenian people, particularly as genocide and atrocious human rights violations continue to be used as weapons of war in the 21st century.

Today, hardly a week goes by without news of horrific human rights violations somewhere around the world. The first step to stop these abuses is to acknowledge them for what they are and then to confront them. That is why it is important that the United States Government finally recognize and call the Armenian genocide what it is and what it was: a systematic attempt by the Ottoman Empire to annihilate the Armenian people.

The challenges, of course, continue today for the people of Armenia. All of us know that earlier this month, violence once again erupted in Nagorno-Karabakh. President Serzh Sargsyan called it “the most wide-scale military action that Azerbaijan has tried to carry out since the establishment of the 1994 ceasefire regime.”

It is critical that the United States remain deeply engaged in resolving this conflict. I recently met with the Armenian Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Grigor Hovhannissian, to discuss relations between our two countries and what role the United States must play to help promote a resolution of this longstanding conflict. I have received briefings on the current situation, and I will continue to advocate for critical American leadership to protect the innocent men, women, and children who are living in Nagorno-Karabakh.

But as we address this current crisis, it is also critical that we continue to push for recognition of the Armenian genocide. History is clear: 101 years ago, 1½ million Armenian men, women, and children were brutally and systematically murdered while living under the Ottoman Empire. That is not an opinion, it is not an interpretation, and it is not an allegation. It is a fact.

In a cable sent to the U.S. Secretary of State on July 10, 1915, the U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire confirmed the persecution of Armenians by “systematic attempts to uproot peaceful Armenian populations, and through arbitrary arrests, terrible tortures, wholesale expulsions, and deportations from one end of the empire to other accompanied by frequent instances of rape, pillage, and murder,

turning into massacre, to bring destruction and destitution on them.”

After 101 years of waiting, it is time for our President and the United States Government to recognize this fact and to acknowledge this atrocity as the first genocide of the 21st century. Armenia is an important friend and ally of the United States, and it is critical that we stand with our friends and honestly acknowledge the evil of the Armenian genocide.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to leave you with the words of Pope Francis who last year reminded all of us that “whenever memory fades, it means that evil allows wounds to fester. Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it.”

After more than 100 years of waiting, it is time for the United States Government to finally recognize the Armenian genocide as the first genocide of the 21st century.

CONFRONTING HEROIN AND OPIOID ABUSE CRISIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, the rapid rise in drug abuse across America, specifically the sharp increase in heroin and prescription opioid abuse, has severely impacted our local communities and has become a major issue across our country.

Tragically, 78 people each day will lose their battle with addiction and their life as a result of an opioid or heroin overdose. Sadly, with the trends moving the way they are, this number will only continue to increase. According to the CDC, in 2014, over 28,000 people lost their lives due to prescription opioid pain relievers or heroin. This was the highest recorded number of overdose deaths of any year. Newsday on Long Island just reported an increase in overdose deaths in our region, stating that 442 people died of a heroin or opiate overdose in 2014, a number that has increased from 403 overdose deaths the prior year.

Addiction is a devastating disease that takes hold of our loved ones and impacts everyone around that person. This is a lonely and heartbreaking disease that is taking lives, tearing families apart, and destroying our communities. It must be stopped.

In a report that highlights the growing drug abuse epidemic sweeping across our Nation, the CDC found that over the past decade, heroin use has doubled among young adults ages 18 to 25, and heroin-related overdose deaths have nearly quadrupled, with every 6 out of 10 drug overdoses linked to opioids or heroin. The CDC also found that almost half of the people who use heroin are also struggling with a prescription opioid addiction. As drug abuse continues to rise, claiming lives and grabbing hold of our youth, it is clear that we must come together to address this crisis.

Throughout my time in the New York State Senate, and now in the United States Congress, one of my top priorities has been to support legislation to help those coping with drug addiction by increasing treatment and recovery services.

One piece of legislation I am proud to support and cosponsor is H.R. 953, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, also known as CARA. CARA would prevent and treat addiction on a local level through community-based education, prevention, treatment, and recovery services. The grants made available through this bill would also provide the necessary funding to expand prescription drug monitoring in States all throughout our country.

Additionally, CARA provides funding to supply our police force and emergency medical responders with higher quantities of Naloxone, a medication that is proven to reverse an opioid overdose. Since this bill was introduced at the beginning of last year, I have been pushing for a vote on CARA in the House. Just last month, the United States Senate passed this bill with an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 94-1. Now it is time to bring this bill to the House floor.

As a member of the Bipartisan Task Force to Combat the Heroin Epidemic, passage in the House of CARA is a top priority of mine, and I will keep fighting so that we can pass this essential piece of legislation and send it to the President's desk for his signature.

There are many other bills, other than CARA, such as the Stop Overdose Stat Act, H.R. 2850. There are bills like the Examining Opioid Treatment Infrastructure Act of 2016, which would require the Comptroller General to issue a report to Congress on substance abuse treatment availability and infrastructure needs across the country, as well as legislation that would task the FDA to create a plan on how to deal with the opioid and heroin epidemic, H.R. 4976.

Fighting drug abuse must be an effort at all levels of government, but it also must be a community effort as well. That is why I have hosted press conferences and panel discussions, including a community summit and drug task force roundtable on Long Island to bring together local elected officials, law enforcement, health professionals, community groups, parents, concerned residents, and recovering substance abusers so that we can all develop and pursue necessary solutions.

The House is also expected to take up legislation to stop the flow of illegal substances into our country, such as H.R. 3380, which would help law enforcement officials identify and target drug traffickers; and H.R. 4985, which makes it easier to prosecute drug traffickers.

We must all continue to support legislation that addresses the rise in heroin and opioid abuse to stop this tragic loss of life, family, and community as a

result of addiction. It is impacting our districts all across America. It is our duty while we are here, as Members of Congress, to do everything in our power to address this now, to turn the tide, to fight back, and to save families that are being torn apart. That is why I support all of these great bills that are moving through the process here in the House.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 101st anniversary of the Armenian genocide and honor the lives of 1.5 million Armenians who were killed between 1915 and 1923 by the Ottoman Empire. The Republic of Turkey, sadly, continues to try to silence the voices of the survivors and their descendants around the world, but we will never forget nor will we be intimidated into silence.

Several years ago I told the foreign minister of Turkey, who is now the President, that Turkey must recognize the genocide and put this chapter of history to rest. It is extremely frustrating that Turkey continues to ignore what really happened, but in addition to that, it is very disappointing and unacceptable that President Obama failed once again to call the murder of 1.5 million Armenians a genocide—because that is what it was.

Recognizing the Armenian genocide is not something to be debated. The Europe Parliament has gone on record of recognizing the genocide, and last year Pope Francis spoke of the tragedy that took place, the Armenian genocide. Scholars and historians acknowledge that the systematic killings and deportations that took place constituted a genocide.

I, however, simply do not have to rely on the word of historians. Growing up in the San Joaquin Valley in the Fresno area, I heard stories from my friends and neighbors, the Kezerians, the Abrahamians, and the Koligians, whose families experienced the horrors at the hands of the Ottoman Empire.

As we reflect on this day, it is equally fitting to honor the hundreds of thousands of Armenian men and women who bravely began new lives in the United States after witnessing unspeakable tragedies to their families and in their villages. Survivors and their descendants, many of whom settled in California, have become bright examples of what it means to live the American Dream in their own diaspora.

I would like to use this opportunity to tell you of an experience last Friday in Fresno. I had the distinct honor of participating in a wreath-laying event with leaders of the Armenian community and the Armenian National Committee of America, its national chairman, Raffi Hamparian.

I want to take this opportunity to honor someone who brought a sense of

justice to those who perished during that time. We want to recognize a true Armenian hero, Soghomon Tehlirian. As a part of Operation Nemesis, planned by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Soghomon Tehlirian assassinated Talaat Pasha, who was the last prime minister of the Ottoman Empire and the orchestrator of the Armenian genocide.

This was an act of justice served on behalf of the Armenian people. Tehlirian was acquitted of the charges by a jury in Germany in the 1920s and later moved to Serbia, and then to San Francisco, California. He died in 1960 and is buried at the Ararat Massis Armenian Cemetery in Fresno, California, which then was the only Armenian cemetery in the country.

I hope my colleagues will join me and the Armenians throughout the Nation and throughout the world in honoring Mr. Tehlirian and to also pay tribute to the 1.5 million lives lost in the genocide—the first genocide in the 20th century—as well as their descendants who live today, for we must never ever forget the history. As Santayana once said: Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.

DENIM DAY

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, on a separate matter, I rise today to recognize Denim Day, which is observed in April throughout the world as being Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

My staff today is wearing denim, joining other organizations throughout the district and throughout the Nation to raise the awareness about sexual violence prevention.

I would like to commend the Valley Crisis Center in Merced, the Madera Community Action Partnership, and the Marjaree Mason Center in Fresno, and the San Joaquin Valley organizations for all that they do to support and serve the victims of sexual assault.

Today, on Denim Day, and every day we stand with the victims and survivors, their families, and their friends to make everyone aware and to prevent the spread of sexual violence.

FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, this year, job creators should expect significant changes to Federal wage and hour laws, throwing yet one more hurdle in front of them and their employees as the U.S. Department of Labor, the DOL, finalizes new overtime regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act, or the FLSA.

The basic premise of the FLSA, which applies to many Pennsylvania employers, is that if you are receiving a salary, it must be because your employer is cheating you. The rule that has the force of law discourages salaried employees and discourages the give-and-take between employee and

employer to work for the best interest of each one.

There are limited exceptions to the FLSA's overtime obligations for narrow categories of employees and for those in particular industries and occupations. The most common exemptions are for white-collar employees like executive, administrative, and professional employees.

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Currently, an employee must satisfy three criteria to qualify as exempt from Federal overtime pay: first, you must make a salary; second, your salary must be more than \$455 per week, or \$23,660 annually; and third, your primary duties must be consistent with managerial, professional, or administrative positions as defined by the Department of Labor. They don't know every single job in every community across the country, but yet they are the ones that decide, not the people actually doing the work or the ones who started and own the business.

Last year, the DOL proposed arbitrarily increasing the salary threshold to \$50,440 per year, a 113 percent increase, just arbitrarily said that is the way it is going to be. It also proposed automatically increasing the salary threshold on an annual basis regardless of what the economy is. If the economy grew at 4 percent, I guess it would be one thing. If it didn't grow or it grew at 0.3 percent, which is what GDP is currently, it would still go up—again, just arbitrary. This doesn't come from Congress. This isn't bandied back and forth between the Democrats and the Republicans, between the House and the Senate. This is just bureaucrats making a rule, the force of law.

These proposed rules will bring sweeping changes to Federal wage and hour laws, and they will be especially burdensome on rural areas, like central Pennsylvania. They will also significantly impact local governments, nonprofit organizations, and small retailers, among many others.

Because of this rule, for instance, a dry cleaner that I met with recently simply is going to have to make a choice. They are either going to hire fewer people or raise prices for their customers.

I recently met with county commissioners in the district I am privileged to represent. If the requirement is raised, as DOL proposes, 50 county employees will be affected, which will result in either fewer employees or nearly \$400,000 in expenses for the county moving forward. How do you think they are going to offset those costs if they don't lose those employees or fire those employees? You guessed it. You and I are going to pay—the local taxpayers.

I also met with the YWCA in my district, a nonprofit organization. They looked at the potential impact of these regulations and determined that approximately 30 staff members would be affected, resulting in either a loss of